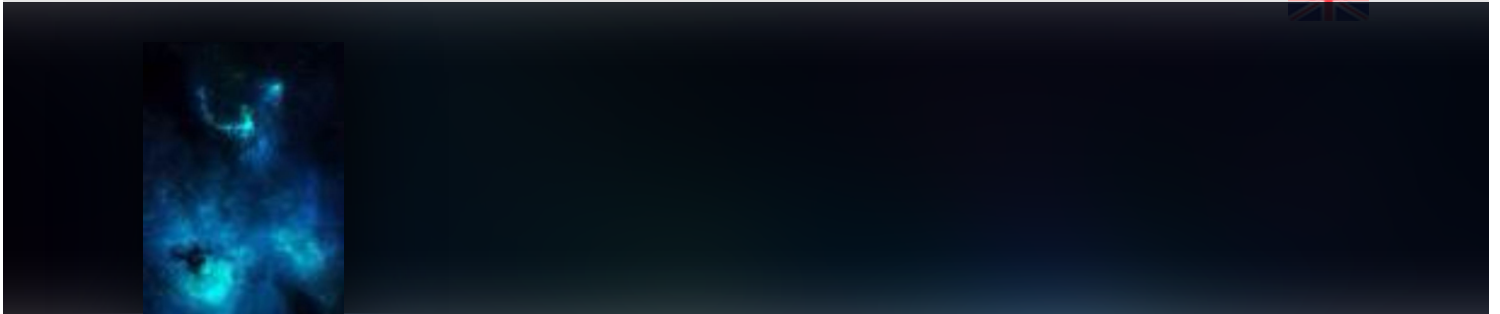




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Penance in Purgatory



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Chapter 1 by Sub-Reality

Death.

Even in a universe full of beings with life spans ranging anywhere between 1 day and 500 years, everything dies. Everything ends. I had figured that part out while I was running with The Black Brotherhood, the most sought after assassin syndicate, be it to bring them to justice or make anything from people to planets, disappear. Yeah, has a beginning and an end. In my time with the Brotherhood I ended a lot of lives. But it wasn't until I almost met mine that I realized just how much what you do in between affects other beginnings and other endings.

Before I came into possession of my ship, the Penance, I was a grubby little Earth-Rat, as most other species might call humans, on some hell hole of a space station in the outskirts of an unknown system. Either orphaned or abandoned, I still don't know, I crawled through the air ducts and slept in the scrap heaps, trying to survive another day, lucky not to be grabbed and sold off to slavers. But I couldn't tell you if it was luck, fate, or what have you that put me in the hands of him. Ghatha. The Hand of Death. Every member of the Brotherhood ended up with a name like that. And he would be the one to give me mine.

I'm Eve Mercer. An Earth-Rat. A former assassin known as The Angel of Death.

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Chapter 2 by Helen Hywater



I popped open a can of tomato sauce, and promptly winced at the smell. Liera hadn't brought much back from her latest haul, and I was still recovering from my near miss with the Black Brotherhood.

"Mercer!" A female voice rang out below me. Instinctively, my brain told me to run, but I calmed myself enough to answer.

"Yes?"

Liera hefted herself onto the platform I stood on, and glared at me.

"We really need to get some stairs," she puffed out.

I laughed, and offered her the rank tomato sauce can as an answer.

"How was your run to Oaal?" I asked her casually.

"Meger rations at the port. But they still bought my ER card, which I could not be happier about. Got you some of those oats you missed in the Brotherhood."

We ate in silence for the rest of the hours until our lights would shut off.

That night though, my brain was busy. My dreams were littered with scenes of the Black Brotherhood catching me. I was on their most wanted list, probably even number one. Ghatha was not too happy about having his Angel of Death betray the Brotherhood to the International Peace Galaxy Committee (IPGC), and I really could not blame him. It was all my fault that the organization had turned corrupt, and I could not deal with it anymore. While Ghatha had urged me on, my conscience had destroyed me from the inside out. Liera was my only friend from before the Brotherhood, and somehow I had found her. She was the one on the run from other entities, ones she hadn't told me about yet. We had been at our location for about a month, and it was nearing our due date to move. Having the Brotherhood and who knew what else on our tail 24/7 meant that we could not risk exposure or long term living arrangements.

In the morning, after an almost sleepless night, my head was clouded, and I felt horrible.

"Leira, I am going to shower," I called out, not bothering to check for a response. Suddenly, I was all too aware of the silence in our raised platform. A bang sounded below, and my heart jumped into my throat.

The Black Brotherhood had found me.

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